

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the above-captioned Application are respectfully requested.

1. The existence of allowable subject matter is appreciatively acknowledged.

2. The objection to the Drawings is respectfully traversed. It is of course understood that positively claimed elements are to be illustrated in the Drawings to the extent reasonably possible. It is submitted that the Drawings, as filed, illustrate all of the elements of the invention that are positively claimed. For example, the reference in Claim 6 to a “captive nut retaining channel” of course does not claim any captive nut as part of the combination. Merely adding a functional clarifier that such a channel ‘can slidably engage one or more captive nuts’ only goes to further define the characteristics of the channel and would not add the “one or more captive nuts” to the claimed combination. To this extent, no modifications or additions to the Drawings, or any modification of the Claims need be made, and the objection should be withdrawn. The specific objections will be described below.

The objection to references in Claim 6 to “engage one or more captive nuts” and to “cooperate with one or more fender mounting bolts” is believed to be misplaced in that neither the captive nuts nor fender mounting bolts are claimed as part of the combination. Instead, these references provide functional characteristics of the claimed “captive nut retaining channel”, which is claimed. These functional characterizations could perhaps have been better presented as a “whereby” statement, but it is believed that the Drawings fully disclose the elements that are claimed.

The objection to Claim 7 pertaining to the “tie-down means restraining a load” is not understood. The structures supporting this claim element are fully shown in Fig. 1 (see in particular tie-down loop 53 and restraint 53a) and Fig. 15, and are supported by the Specification materials describing the invention as a whole and these Figs in particular. It is believed that the elements of Claim 7 are fully shown in the Drawings and described in the Specification, and that this objections should be withdrawn. If the

Examiner continues to have an objection, it is respectfully requested that the objection be made more specific.

Claim 10 is in the means-plus-function form and clearly recites structure that meets the stated functionality without need for showing any nuts, bolts, or otherwise, in that the “fender coupling means” is “arranged to support the associated fender”. That is precisely the structure shown, described and claimed, there being no indication in the Claim that the total assembled structure including nuts, bolts and a fender is to be included in the claimed combination.

Finally, Claim 16 further defines that “each said fender mounting structure includes a channel along the length” of each of the of the “second and third support members”, where each of the channels is “adapted to function as a captive nut retaining capacity”. The latter clause further defines the nature of the channels and does not function to include any captive nuts in the claimed combination.

The discussion in the Specification of the fender mounting characteristics of the invention is set forth at pages 13 – 14 of the Preliminary Amendment, in the discussion related to FIG. 10. It is submitted that such description in conjunction with the Drawings as submitted comply with the disclosure requirements for the Claims enumerated by the Examiner.

In spite of the foregoing reasons indicating that no change to the Drawings or Claims would be necessary, and in attempt to be cooperative in bringing the prosecution to timely conclusion, amendments have been made herein to even more clearly provide claim limitations in language that does not require any modifications to the Drawings. It is believed that the amendments have made it even more clear that the references to captive-nut retaining capabilities are limitations on the described structure(s), and that these characteristic limitations do not include the captive-nuts or associated bolts in the claimed structures.

With the foregoing in mind and in view of the amendments made, it is respectfully requested that the objections to the Drawings be withdrawn, and that the Drawings be found to be in compliance with 37 CFR 1.83(a).

3. The Claim Objections have been noted, and appropriate amendments have been made herein to address these objections. The care of the Examiner in considering the formalities of the Claims, and noting the objectionable informalities is appreciated.

4. The allowability of Claims 7-17 is appreciatively acknowledged.

5. The allowability of Claims 1-6 and 18-20 upon correction of objections to related base Claims is also appreciatively acknowledged. It is believed that all such objections have been addressed and removed in view of Arguments and Claim amendments made herein.

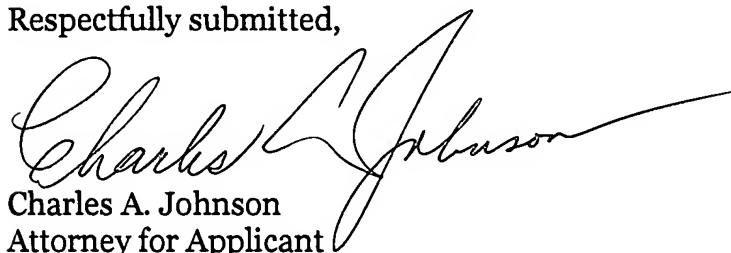
Conclusion

The objection to the Drawings and to certain of the Claims should be withdrawn.

Claims 1 – 20 remain in the Application; and, having addressed all of the reasons for objections herein, they are allowable as presently presented. An early Notice to that effect is requested.

Should the Examiner deem it beneficial to discuss any matter to further the prosecution of the Application to Allowance, she is urged to call the undersigned Attorney for Applicant at her convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles A. Johnson", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

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